Tag:
Source:    piccol
Story:     iwt.mestaf.piccol.H0002630
Depth:       4.5

{ep}

Mr. Weisberg,

Thanks again for your time and assistance. I feel compelled to point out a gaffe which left the conspiracy piece somewhat short of comments from you. The editors inadvertantly grabbed an older, unedited version of the story and ran it. For what it's worth, I've enclosed a copy of the version I had intended for them to use.{ep}

Enclosed also is a copy of Matt Neufeld's article, if he hasn't already sent you one, and the tape of our interview. I had promised you a couple of other wire and magazine articles which I'll mail later.{ep}

As for the records you gave me--the Katzenbach memo and Officer Jackson's written statement--we unfortunately did not have the time or copy space to work up stories around them (I recently saw Katzenbach on a documentary about the JFK-Gov. Wallace dispute. It's disheartening to think a man who was so key to Kennedy's civil rights push could have written such a calculating memo about the assassination). But we haven't ruled them out for follow-up stories.{ep}

Sincerely,

Sean Piccoli

P.S. My regards to Mrs. Weisberg. Hope to see you both again soon -

SP

~~[illegible]~~ VERSION AS IT WAS SUPPOSED TO RUN

Tag: conspiracy forHUGH
Source: piccol
Story: twt.mestaf.piccol.R0002654
Depth: 38.4

[illegible]-By Sean Piccoli{ep}
THE WASHINGTON TIMES{ep}

On a sunny Friday afternoon in Dallas, President John F. Kennedy's motorcade rolled through Dealey Plaza, past the old Texas School Book Depository and into the crosshairs of at least one sniper's gun. The argume over what happened next begins with the first shot.{ep}

After 25 years, questions about the public murders of a young, charismatic president and his alleged assassin still linger. Without an explaination believable to all, conspiracy theories thrive.{ep}

The 1964 Warren Commission report states that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, shot and killed Mr. Kennedy from a sixth-floor window in the book depository and that Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby, acting alone, shot Mr. Oswald dead in the basement of Dallas Police headquarters.{ep}

Adherents insist the report stands. But critics have picked it apart and offered instead a rogues' gallery of Mafia hit men, KGB 'liquidators,' body doubles, vengeful veterans of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, or French mercenaries carrying out the CIA's most unspeakable covert operation.{ep}

Who's right? It depends on who you ask.{ep}

"The CIA killed president Kennedy and we can prove it," says attorney Mar Lane, author of "Rush to Judgement," the 1966 bestseller which blasted the official version.{ep}

According to Mr. Lane, President Kennedy was furious with the CIA for twice lying to him and had vowed to dismantle the agency. The CIA, bent on self-preservation, dispatched assassins to Dallas after "setting down a series of blood-red footprints" that would lead to a hapless Lee Harvey Oswald, a one-time defector to the Soviet Union, Mr. Lane says.{ep}

Mr. Oswald "was allowed to live for 48 hours, then shot to death by [Dall nightclub owner] Jack Ruby, who worked for the FBI," which aided the coveru Mr. Lane explains.{ep}

The CIA then concocted a story about Mr. Oswald's contacts with the KGB and fed it to Chief Justice Earl Warren, convincing him to sit on the "truth or risk World War Three, he says.{ep}

Mr. Lane's theory adds another layer of deception to others. But the version getting play of late implicates the Mafia, which had every reason to hate John Kennedy because of Attorney General Robert Kennedy's crackdown on organized crime.{ep}

According to some theorists, New Orleans crime boss Carlos Marcello swore to kill the president for turning brother Bobby loose on them after the election {em-} which the Mob helped carry by rigging votes in key states.{ep

Marcello {em-} now in federal prison {em-} and fellow capos Sam Giancana Traficante {em-} both dead {em-} hired Mob hit men for the job, made Mr. Osw their patsy, and sent crony Jack Ruby to silence him.{ep}

The Mafia angle, discussed by syndicated columnist Jack Anderson in the mid-1970s, was charted in "Conspiracy," a 1980 book by British writer Anthor Summers.{ep}

Mr. Anderson, a former supporter of the Warren Commission Report, endorses part of that theory. But a thesis he advanced in his television exposi lays the president's murder to Cuba's Fidel Castro.{ep}

"I don't have a smoking gun," Mr. Anderson says. "What I do have is .{thir overwhelming evidence that the [CIA's] attempts to kill Fidel Castro backfired." The very mobsters the CIA recruited to kill him were somehow turned around and sent to Dallas, Mr. Anderson contends.{ep}

President Lyndon B. Johnson knew the truth but feared a confrontation with Cuba could escalate. So he went to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.{ep}

"What happened, I think, is that they sat down with one another and Johnson said to Hoover, 'Ed, we could be at war. You've got to convince the Warren Commission that JFK was the victim of a lone deranged gunman,'{thin}" Mr. Anderson says.{ep}

But David W. Belin, counsel to the Warren Commission and a Rockefeller Commission attorney who uncovered the CIA campaign against Mr. Castro, says the Cuba scenario is a bust and Mafia theories defy common sense.{ep}

He also points to Mr. Anderson's use in one instance of an eyewitness named Jean Hill.{ep}

"He neglected to mention this was the same Jean Hill who thought she saw a 'fuzzy white dog' in the presidential limousine," Mr. Belin says. "If I wanted to pick and choose witnesses I could do a better job of proving a conspiracy. That would be false."{ep}

Mr. Anderson says, "I [too] am troubled by all of the wild theories that have been advanced, and I am worried to death that I am going to be lumped with them. .{thin}.{thin}. I don't have theories. I have facts."{ep}

In another scenario, the KGB recruits a dishonorably discharged U.S. Marine and young defector named Lee Harvey Oswald during his three years in Russia.{ep}

British author Michael H.B. Eddowes {em-} whose own theory led to the exhumation of Mr. Oswald's corpse {em-} says that after Mr. Oswald returned to America, he kept in contact with a KGB's assassination and sabotage chief stationed in Mexico City.{ep}

Mr. Eddowes, author of "Kruschchev Killed Kennedy" and "The Oswald File" claimed the man buried in Mr. Oswald's grave was in fact a KGB agent. He persuaded Mr. Oswald's Russian-born widow, Marina Oswald Porter, to have the body exhumed in 1981. An autopsy concluded it was Mr. Oswald.{ep}

Author David S. Lifton focused on another body: the president's. In his exhaustively researched novel, "Best Evidence," (1980) he claimed president Kennedy's wounds were surgically altered to remove evidence of a second gunman and therefore of a conspiracy.{ep}

To achieve this, the President's body was shuffled from casket to casket and doctored after leaving Dallas but before the autopsy at Bethesda Naval Hospital.{ep}

Mr. Lifton never names a conspirator but suggests there was "a plot involving the executive branch of government."{ep}

"Lifton presented a lot of evidence that the world was flat," says Los Angeles attorney Vincent Bugliosi, who served as prosecutor in an 18-hour posthumous trial of Lee Harvey Oswald, televised in London.{ep}

"To suppress a conspiracy theory is difficult," Mr. Bugliosi says. Mr. Lifton's theory would demand a cast of hundreds and "you can't do something like that. It leaks out through the wife, the mistress, the child or something like that," he says.{ep}

The Warren Commission advanced the "single bullet theory," stating one bullet hit Mr. Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally both, another missed, and a third, fatal bullet struck Mr. Kennedy in the head.{ep}

But critics claim Mr. Oswald could not shoot, work the rifle bolt, aim and shoot again in the brief time between the first shots. They call the single-bullet theory a sham, designed to prop up a conclusion no factual account could support.{ep}

The House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979 said acoustic evidence gleaned from police tape recordings pointed to a second gunman on the fabled "grassy knoll" of Dealey Plaza. But those findings were discredited by a 1982 National Academy of Sciences study.{ep}

"Nobody knows what happened. That's absolutely surreal," says Josiah Thompson, a private investigator from San Francisco and author of "Six Seconds in Dallas (1967)," a detailed study which concluded three gunmen shot the president.{ep}

"The most thoroughly investigated homicide of anybody in our history and we end up with no answer," Mr. Thompson says.{ep}

So theories abound.{ep}

"A lot of them are very fringe and easily lend themselves to ridicule," says says attorney James Lesar, vice president of the Assassination Archive and Research Center in Washington.{ep}

One holds that the assassin was trying to kill First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. Another claims Governor Connally was the target.{ep}

Newer theories put an international spin on the murder. British producer Nigel Turner's new documentary names a Corsican assassin as the second gunman. A British program produced by writer Steve Rivele suggests that French mercenaries {em-} assassins-for-hire based in Marseilles {em-} were in
on Nov. 22, 1963.{ep}

'If you're unscrupulous enough, you can make a case out of anything,' says Harold Weisberg, author of six books on the assassination and a leading critic of the Warren Commission.{ep}

Mr. Weisberg says the assassination probe was a fiasco, conducted by people more interested in damage control than the truth.{ep}

Nevertheless, "I oppose all of the conspiracy theories .{thin}.{thin}. not i
of how a person thinks, but in terms of taking it to the people as a solution, as an explaination,' Mr. Weisberg says. "It's a disservice.'{ep}

So why persist?{ep}

'I don't think there's much chance of finding out what actualy happened when John Kennedy was killed,' Mr. Weisberg replies. 'But I think there's a much better chance of seeing to it the government doesn't pull the same kind of cointelpro<co cq> on the truth and the people if something like this happens again."{ep}

Such talk irks people like Warren Commission counsel Belin.{ep}

'There is not a conspiracy theory I cannot refute if given the opportunity," he declares. 'The thing that's exasperating is that a guy like Jack Anderson can get two hours on television and I can't get ten minutes.'{ep

Both sides agree on one thing: many Americans no longer believe the Warren Commission Report.{ep}

Single-bullet theorists blame public perception on the critics. Mr. Bugliosi says, 'All they've been hearing for 25 years is the shrill voice of the conspiracy theorists."{ep}

Mr. Weisberg insists that responsible inquiry must continue. A full accounting "would add much to the security of any president, not to have this kind of Damocles Sword swinging over his head,' he said. 'Do you consign to history with the dubious epitaph, the dubious autopsy that John Kennedy got? It's got to scare everybody."{ep}